

# On the Categorical Status of *such*

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**Lee, Jungmee. 2004. On the Categorical Status of *such*. SNU Working Papers in English Language and Linguistics 3, #-#. On the categorial status of *such*, there have been many attempts to capture its complicated and idiosyncratic semantic and syntactic properties. However, even in the influential grammar books, a word-class of *such* does appear to be out of accord with each other. In this paper, after investigating various properties of *such* and reviewing the main previous studies, I indicate the limitations of the previous analyses and furthermore attempt to establish a new categorization of *such* : the 'modifier' *such* as adjective, and the 'head' *such* as pronoun. (Seoul National University)**

**Keywords:** the 'modifier' *such*, the 'head' *such*, binary analysis, uniform analysis, adjectival treatment, determiner treatment, pronominal treatment

## 1. Introduction

The word *such* shows various syntactic and semantic properties, which have been proved to be troublesome for linguists to analyze its word-class status in a clear-cut way. In section 2 of this paper, I first investigate the complicated syntactic and semantic properties of *such*. In section 3, I introduce previous studies largely based on two approaches (the binary approach and the uniform approach). Finally in section 4, indicating the limitations of the two previous approaches, I provide my proposal on the categorial status of *such*.

For the explanatory convenience, I classify *such* into two categories, each of which appears in different syntactic environments as follows:

- (1) We've had *such* a time.
- (2) *Such* is life.

In (1), it is clear that *such* is present with a noun and forms a constituent with the following nominal expression [a time]<sup>1)</sup>. Therefore it is to be

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1) In this sentence, whether *such* is within the noun phrase or not is a more complicated

analyzed as one of the modifiers within the Noun Phrase. But in (2), *such* forms a phrasal constituent by itself without the presence of another noun. Thus these two types of *such* exhibit obviously different properties from each other. I refer to *such* in the former construction as a 'modifier' *such* and in the latter construction as a 'head' *such*. In the next section, the syntactic and semantic properties of these two types of *such* will be discussed. <sup>2)</sup>

## 2. Properties of *such*

On the properties of *such*, many grammarians have long noted its idiosyncratic properties, and admitted difficulties in dealing with it in a complete and uniform way. As a result, they failed to give satisfactory explanations only to enumerate various properties of *such*. For instance, Quirk et al. (1985) treated *such* as a determiner, intensifier, predeterminer, and pronoun. Sinclair (1990) analyzed *such* as a determiner, predeterminer and adjective, not considering the function of the 'head' *such*. Namely, they attempted to explain the features of *such*, but mostly they regarded the unusual behaviour of *such* as an exceptional case to the conventional characteristics of the specific grammatical category. In this section I will review these idiosyncratic properties of *such*.

### 2.1 The 'modifier' *such*

#### 2.1.1 Syntactic Properties

Regarding the properties of a 'modifier' *such*, the main focus has been on a linear order of *such* in the relation with several types of predeterminers, central determiners, and postdeterminers. Biber et al. (1999: 259) summarized the order of prenominal items on a table in the following.

(3) Positional groups of determiners <sup>3)</sup>

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theory-dependent syntactic issue, by which analyzing [a time] can have two options to be a N-bar level or a Noun Phrase level.

2) Spinillo (2003: 195) also provides the similar classification to mine by the criteria of co-presence with the nominal expression.

3) I follow this table as data on the linear order of various prenominals, but I find out that this table has one problem that it analyzes 'other' as a predeterminer. I categorize

predeterminer	central determiner	postdeterminer		head
		(1)	(2)	
<i>all</i>	<i>the</i>		<i>four</i>	<i>races</i>
<i>both</i>	<i>those/these</i>	<i>other</i>		<i>guys</i>
<i>half</i>	<i>a</i>			<i>cup</i>
<i>twice/double</i>	<i>the</i>			<i>size</i>
	<i>the</i>		<i>few</i>	<i>occasions</i>
	<i>his</i>	<i>first/last</i>	<i>two</i>	<i>years</i>
	<i>the/those</i>	<i>other</i>	<i>five</i>	<i>fellows</i>

In this table, determiner groups have various members such as articles (*a/an, the*), multipliers (*double, once, twice* etc.), possessives (*my, your* etc.), demonstratives (*this/these, that/those*), quantifiers (*all, both, half, few* etc.) and ordinal/cardinal numerals (*one, two/ first, last* etc.). When they co-occur in the prenominal position, they show a fixed order as appeared above.

However, *such* is different from these items in that its position is not fixed as one of the predeterminers, central determiners or postdeterminers. Consider the following examples:

- (4) a. *Such* an event is rare.  
b. He has *such* a beautiful voice.
- (5) a. I like no *such* thing.  
b. He has any *such* friend.  
c. Would you let me informed some *such* rumors?
- (6) a. She's just like one of many *such* people around the neighborhood.  
b. Give me one *such* specific example.  
c. John used the first *such* unit in doing the work.

As noted above, *such* appears in various syntactic positions : (4) as the predeterminers, (5) following the central determiners<sup>4)</sup>, and (6) after the postdeterminers. Therefore, to analyze *such* as a member of the

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<sup>4)</sup> 'other' as one of the adjectives, and use this as one of the bases of my argumentation in section 3.

4) I assume that 'no', 'any' and 'some' is one of the central determiners, since they cannot co-occur with the most typical central determiner, indefinite/definite articles.

determiner groups is extremely complicated for a uniform conclusion on the categorial status of a 'modifier' *such*.

Due to these special co-occurrence patterns with the determiners, Biber et al. (1999: 280-281) described *such* as one of the 'semi-determiners' along with *same/other*, *former/latter*, *last/next*, and *certain*, admitting that these words have the adjectival properties in contrast to typical determiners. However, as Spinillo (2003) indicated, their approach lacks explanations of what features 'semi-determiners' and 'adjectives' share and do not share.

### 2.1.2 Semantic Properties

In order to do a correct analysis of the 'modifier' *such*, it is helpful to list definitions from a few major English dictionaries.

- (7) a. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary:
  - i so great
  - ii of a particular or similar type
- b. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary:
  - i of the character, quality or extent previously indicated or implied
  - ii of so extreme a degree or quality
  - iii of the same class, type, or sort
- c. American Heritage Dictionary of English Language:
  - i of this kind ; of a kind specified or implied
  - ii of a degree or quality indicated; of so extreme a degree or quality

Two meanings of *such* can be summarized: identifying and intensifying. The first is used to talk about the same kind of person or thing that has already been mentioned in the linguistic or discourse context. The second meaning is used to emphasize the extreme degree or quality as the exclamative construction. According to these semantic differences, previous studies presented in section 3 have analyzed the categorial status of *such* respectively.

## 2.2 The 'head' *such*

### 2.2.1 Syntactic Properties

The 'head' *such* appears in the syntactic environment where *such* is not analyzed to modify some elements in the local phrase as follows:

- (8) *Such* was the result.
- (9) If *such* exists, I will kill him!

In these sentences, *such* forms a phrasal constituent by itself and also plays a role of syntactic Head in the phrase. Whether it is categorized as a Noun Phrase or an Adjective Phrase is dependent on the way of analyzing the given sentence. I will deal with these issues in the next section.

### 2.2.2 Semantic Properties

On the semantic properties of the 'head' *such*, consider the following definition in the dictionary:

- (10) Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary:
  - i someone or something stated, implied or exemplified
  - ii someone or something similar

As a similar meaning of the identifying 'modifier' *such* in the previous section, the 'head' *such* is also used to mention the person or thing that has previously appeared in the linguistic or discourse context. In mentioning the referent, it needs not be exactly the same item as what *such* indicates to. It may be just the same type as the referent (Altenberg 1994: 229-30). Concerning this meaning for the partial identity, Halliday and Hasan (1976: 76-87) used the term 'comparative reference'.

## 3. Previous Analyses and Limitations

I will review the previous analyses on the categorial status of *such* in this section. Due to the peculiar syntactic and semantic properties of *such*, the previous approaches have not been in accord with each other. As the main approaches from grammarians, I will investigate the two analyses on *such*: the binary analysis and the uniform analysis.

### 3.1 The Binary Analysis

#### 3.1.1 Altenberg (1994) and de Munnink (1996)

Altenberg (1994) and de Munnink (1996) set the semantic properties of *such* as the beginning point of their argumentation. As seen in the previous section, the 'modifier' *such* has the two different meanings of identifying and intensifying. According to this semantic distinction, they classify the word-class of *such* as follows:

(11)

syntactic criterion	a 'modifier' <i>such</i>		a 'head' <i>such</i>	
semantic criterion	intensifying	identifying	intensifying	identifying
Altenberg (1994)	degree adverb	determiner	pronoun	
de Munnink (1996)	degree adverb	adjective	pronoun	

They indicate that the semantic difference is reflected syntactically. That is, the syntactic environment where intensifying *such* appears does not correspond to the syntactic environment where identifying *such* appears. First, the intensifying *such* only combines with gradable elements in the noun phrase, whereas the identifying *such* does not. And the intensifying *such* appears only before the indefinite article, but the identifying *such* does not show such a restricted combining pattern or positional property. Based on these observations, Altenberg (1994) and de Munnink (1996) argue that the intensifying *such* and the identifying *such* belong to different word-classes as shown in (11). In the following section, I will review more of their evidences and discuss my argumentations on them.

#### 3.1.2 Limitations of the Binary Analysis

Altenberg (1994) and de Munnink (1996) viewed the intensifying *such* in the modifier position as a degree adverb like *quite*, *rather*, *so*. As a powerful evidence of the adverbial treatments of *such*, they presented that the construction containing the intensifying *such* is often paraphrased

by the construction with the degree adverb *so* like in (12).

- (12) a. *such* a beautiful girl  
b. *so* beautiful a girl

However, the intensifying *such* differs from other degree adverbs in that it modifies only the noun, not the verbs, other adverbs, or the adjectives as in (13), (14), and (15). Therefore, although immediate paraphrasing is possible, it cannot be said that *such* completely shares the modifying ability with the degree adverbs. In addition, the restriction of *quite* and *rather* on the following nominal expression is very different from that of *such*, as shown in (16).

- (13) a. The boy *quite/rather* likes it.  
b. \*The boy *such* likes it.  
(14) a. She paints *quite/rather* well.  
b. \*She paints *such* well.  
(15) a. I feel *quite/rather* better tonight.  
b. \*I feel *such* better tonight.  
(16) a. It was *quite/rather* the worst dinner I have ever had.  
b. \*It was *such* the worst dinner I have ever had.

Second, it is worthwhile to note the different categorization between Altenberg and de M<sup>o</sup>rink. Altenberg regarded the identifying *such* in the modifier position as a determiner, while de M<sup>o</sup>rink classified it as an adjective. The determiner analysis by Altenberg is one of the conventional treatments of *such* in the modifier position, based on the observation that *such* is different from the typical adjectives in the following several respects : ( i *such* lacks the descriptive contents compared with that of a typical adjective, ( ii *such* does not show the co-occurrence pattern with the degree adverbs, ( iii *such* does not have the comparative/superlative forms, and ( iv *such* comes between two determiners, *no* and *other*.

However, this observation on *such* cannot provide confirming grounds for the determiner analysis due to the following reasons : ( i *such* has sufficient semantic information that is similar to the meaning of adjectives such as *same*, *similar*, *equal* and *identical*, which describe the relation with the referent, ( ii the inability of co-occurrence with the degree adverbs

cannot be regarded as the only property of determiner, since some adjectives such as *utter* also cannot be modified by degree adverbs, (iii) there are some other adjectives which do not have the comparative/superlative forms such as *utter*<sup>5)</sup> and (iv) *other* which he regards as a determiner is not a determiner but an adjective that can form an alternate order with *such*, as in the case of *another*.

- (17) a. *\*very such* books
- b. *\*very utter* nonsense
- (18) a. *\*sucher/the suchest* books
- b. *\*utterer/the utterest* nonsense
- (19) a. no *such* other/another girl
- b. no other/another *such* girl

As observed above, the determiner analysis cannot hold the validity. Therefore, following de Mink's adjectival treatment, I will provide more pieces of evidence on the adjectival treatment of the 'modifier' *such* in the section 4.

In addition, as a third and the most critical problem of the binary approach, the semantic distinction between the intensifying *such* and the identifying *such* cannot establish a clear-cut boundary line as Bolinger (1972: 60) pointed out. In other words, it is more accurate to consider *such* to have both meaning of identifying and intensifying simultaneously, but the salience of one property is determined by other factors. This explains why *such*, which already includes the intensifying meaning, cannot co-occur with the degree adverb. Regarding this issue, Spinillo (2003: 207) argues that the gradable meaning of the following nominal expression has an influence on the salience of one reading between identifying and intensifying meaning.

### 3.2 The Uniform Analysis

#### 3.2.1 Huddleston & Pullum (2002) and Spinillo (2003)

Huddleston & Pullum (2002) and Spinillo (2003) account for every function of *such* as an adjective as follows:

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5) Quirk et al. (1985: 404) name these adjectives 'intensifying adjectives', including *absolute*, *sheer*, and *total*.



(20)

syntactic criterion	a 'modifier' <i>such</i>	a 'head' <i>such</i>
semantic criterion	intensifying & identifying	intensifying & identifying
Huddleston & Pullum (2002)	adjective	
Spinillo (2003)	adjective	

Their analyzing the 'modifier' *such* as an adjective is not a radical approach, since the binary approach has already noticed the idiosyncratic properties of *such* compared to those of an typical determiner and furthermore some researchers like de Munnink (1996) categorized *such* as an adjective. Concerning this unusual property of *such*, a uniform approach analyzes it as an adjective and attempts to apply this categorization even to a 'head' *such*, which is traditionally described as a pronoun.

Huddleston & Pullum (2002) and Spinillo (2003) concentrate on the relationship between *such* and the following nominal expression. A conventional relationship between a determiner and a noun is syntactical. That is, in English, a determiner is restricted on the selection of number, therefore forming a phrase like *\*a books* is not possible, only permitting *a book* or *books*. But *such* does not require the syntactic correspondence to the following noun, therefore we can easily make an easily make the phrase *such a book*, or *such books*. That is, the relation between *such* and a noun is similar to that of an adjective and a noun.

### 3.2.2 Limitations of the Uniform Analysis

A uniform analysis is a good attempt to capture the consistency of syntactic and semantic information of a certain lexical item. However the adjectival approach even applied to the 'head' *such*, I claim, goes too far to have many unexplicable examples.

First, Spinillo (2003) accounts for the 'head' noun in the subject position as the result of inversion. However, this inversion-analysis

can only explain the form of '*Such* + *copular verb*~' in (21), not '*Such* + *intransitive verb*' in (22).

(21) *Such* was the result.

(22) If *such* exists, I will kill him!

Inversion occurs only in the restricted syntactic condition, hence analyzing every 'head' *such* in the subject position as inverted adjective is also restricted in some particular constructional conditions. That is, the 'head' *such* does not always occur in the inverted sentence. As a strong evidence to reject the inversion-analysis, OED provides the form of '*Such is* ~' as the exclamative phrase which dates back to Middle English.

Second, Mackenzie (1997: 92) and Spinillo (2003: 208) regard the semantic information of the 'head' *such* as 'property-referring' rather than 'entity-referring', and they consider this fact to reject the pronominal analysis of the 'head' *such*. However, 'property-referring' and 'entity-referring' cannot be a criterion to determine a word-class. For example, adjective/noun pairs such as *beautiful/beauty*, *important/importance* are all used to refer the properties of certain entity, but they belong to different word-class.

Third, as Spinillo's (2003: 208) further evidence for the adjectival analysis, he compares two sentences in (23) and (24) as follows:

(23) His aloneness was *such* that it was a numbing coldness.

(24) His aloneness was *so great* that it was a numbing coldness.

He analyzes *such* in (23) as one of the adjectives which function identically with *great* in (24). However this analysis is not correct. In (24), the trigger of *that*-dependent is not the pure adjective *great* but the degree adverb *so*. That is, it is the intensifier like *such* and *so* that functions as a trigger of *that*-dependent. These examples only capture the fact that *such* has the 'intensifying' meaning like the degree adverb.

Huddleston & Pullum's (2002: 550-1) analysis also has similar problems to that of the above case. Consider the following phrases, provided as an evidence of the adjectival treatment of *such*.

- (25) a. *so massive* an instrument  
       b. *too great* a tendency  
 (26) a. *such* a plan  
       b. *such* a shame

Huddleston & Pullum view that the adjective phrase *so massive* and *too great* have the same distribution as that of *such*, hence *such* should be analyzed to form the adjective phrase by itself. However, notice that the trigger of the following nominal expression in (25) is not the adjectives *massive* or *great*, but the degree adverb *so* and *too*. Therefore, in (25), if the degree adverb *so* or *too* do disappear, the phrase *\*massive an instrument* and *\*great a tendency* cannot be guaranteed their grammaticality. In addition, even though it is correct that *such* forms the adjective phrase by itself, without the further syntactic argumentation, it cannot be said that the lexical item *such* is the head of the adjective phrase.

#### 4. My Analysis

In this section, based on the limitations of the previous analyses in section 3, I argue that there is a necessity to stipulate new categorization of *such* as follows:

(27)

syntactic criterion	a 'modifier' <i>such</i>	a 'head' <i>such</i>
semantic criterion	intensifying & identifying	intensifying & identifying
Lee (2004)	adjective	pronoun

##### 4.1 On the Semantic Criteria

The previous studies concentrated on the semantic distinction of *such* into intensifying and identifying, but I assume that the distinction is not influential enough to determine the word-class of *such*. This view was supported by the uniform analysis. They viewed that the two

meanings are inherently contained in *such* of every sentence, but only the salience of one meaning is emphasized by other factors such as the graduality of the following nominal expression.

Following their assumptions, I also assume that the critical factor of being interpreted as the intensifying meaning is the fact whether the following nominal expression is gradable or not. In addition, I claim that the critical factor of being interpreted as identifying meaning is the fact whether the referent of *such* is mentioned or not on the discourse. Consider the following examples:

- (28) a. *such* a house  
b. *such* a beautiful house

In (28), *a house* is a non-gradable noun, hence (28a) has only the identifying meaning. But when the gradable adjective is added to *a house* like in (28b), it has the intensifying meaning. However, the gradability of a following noun is not the only and the absolute semantic criterion on determining the *such*-reading. Let's observe the sentences on the discourse level.

- (29) That house looks very good. I want to live in *such* a beautiful house.

In (29), only looking at the phrase *such a beautiful house*, *such* has the intensifying meaning as (28b). However, it needs to be noted that *such* in (29) has the both identifying and intensifying meanings, since the referent obviously appears in the previous sentence. Conclusively, the meaning of *such* is not determined by *such* per se, but determined by several factors such as the semantic information of the preceding and following expression.

#### 4.2 The 'modifier' *such*

I claim that the adjectival analysis of *such* is more correct than the determiner analysis. I have already provided the basic evidences for the adjectival treatment in section 3, mentioning the limitations of previous studies. In this section, I will provide more evidences for the adjectival treatment of *such*.

First of all, *such* is observed to appear between two adjectives in

Denison's (2003) corpus research as follows:

(30) The latest *such* gratifying eye-popper comes from Manhattan.

In (30), *the* is a central determiner; *latest* is a typical adjective shown as a superlative form; and *gratifying* is also an adjective. Without the special introduction of a movement mechanism, *such* is to be analyzed to belong to an adjective phrase with *latest* and *gratifying*.

Second, when *such* is used in the modifier position of a noun phrase, it structurally binds the adjective in the previous sentence, not the determiner or anything else. Consider the following examples:

(31) Your dress looks very beautiful. I want to have *such* a dress, too.

In (31), *such* means *beautiful* in the previous sentence. Concerning this binding relationship of *such*, Siegel (1994: 492) aims that the syntactic behavior of *such* is similar to that of pronoun, therefore *such* is appeared to keep the Binding Principle B. The more accurate observation of the binding behavior of *such* is beyond the scope of this paper, but I assume that in the case of a modifier *such*, what *such* refers to is usually an adjective that is typically used to describe the property of referent.

Third, '*such and such*' can be used as a phrase. The most apparent distinction of an adjective and a determiner is that the former permits the stacking, but the latter does not. Therefore, *such and such a girl* is guaranteed the grammaticality, but *\*a and a girl/ \*the and the girl* is not.

#### 4.3 The 'head' *such*

I argue that in the case of a 'head' *such*, it should be analyzed as a pronoun which is supported by the binary analysis and rejected by the uniform analysis. I have already mentioned in section 3 that the extensive application of an adjectival analysis is too radical to capture the pronominal behaviour of *such*. In addition to the above-provided evidences, I will present more results from the observation of *such* as follows.

First, the use of *such* in the coordinated structure of nominal expression is one evidence of the categorization of a 'head' *such* as a pronoun. It is because the coordination is usually used as one of the constituency

test. For example, the phrase such as [*wine, beer and such*] is guaranteed the grammaticality, since *such* in this example is a noun phrase like *wine, beer*. If *such* is analyzed as adjective in this phrase, the ungrammaticality of the phrase such as \**[wine, beer and alcoholic]* cannot be accounted for. Therefore, as one of the strongest test of a word-class, the coordination confirms the validity of a pronominal analysis on the 'head' *such*.

Second, consider the phrase '*as such*' which is occasionally located in the sentence-final position as (32) and (33).

(32) There wasn't much vegetarian food *as such*, although there were several different types of cheese.

(33) We don't have a secretary *as such*, but we do have a student who comes in to do a bit of filing.

In the above examples, *such* takes the position of the prepositional object. In English, the nominal expression such as the noun phrase or the gerund phrase is only permitted in the position of a prepositional object. Therefore, if *such* is analyzed as an adjective, not only the grammatical stipulation on a prepositional object is ignored but also the ungrammaticality of the sentence containing the phrasal form of '*as + adjective*' cannot be explained. Someone may claim that '*as such*' is one of the idiomatic expressions, which can be more freely applied to the grammatical restriction. However, I argue that this expression is far from the idiomatic expression, since the identifying meaning of *such* is still activated in the phrasal meaning. If this is a type of idiomatic expressions, it will not show the compositional pattern, which forms the phrasal meaning as a result of assembling the meaning of each component.

Third, as a morphological evidence, I note how the word *suchlike* was formed and used. The suffix '*-like*' freely attaches to nouns, and forms the meaning of 'typical of, or suitable to something'. For example, consider the words such as *womanlike, ladylike, childlike, gold-like* and *jelly-like*. The base to which the suffix '*-like*' will attach should be a noun, as the base of the above examples are all nouns. Therefore, the 'head' *such* needs to be analyzed as a pronoun.

## 5. Conclusion

Conclusively, in semantic and syntactic aspects, I argue that the binary

approach is more accurately supported than the recent uniform analysis of *such*. However, the previous binary approach was also problematic in that they did not capture the similar properties between the 'modifier' *such* and an adjective. Therefore, I accept the adjectival treatment of the 'modifier' *such* by the uniform analysis, mentioning the problems of the determiner analysis by the binary analysis. On the other hand, in the case of the 'head' *such*, I analyze it as a pronoun, showing that the extended application of an adjectival analysis to the 'head' *such* has the critical limitations. That is, I claim that the pronominal analysis of a 'head' *such* is a more correct categorization. In sum, I establish a new categorization of *such* into two grammatical categories, in the case of the 'modifier' *such* as an adjective and in the case of the 'head' *such* as a pronoun.

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